



*Vegetarian eating has always been a way of life for part of the world's population. In recent years, however, interest in this eating plan has grown dramatically, especially among teenagers. Some people choose this way of eating as a statement of their concern about environmental and animal welfare issues. Others have made this choice because of religion, changing social attitudes, and the growing acceptance of vegetarian lifestyles. Affordability may be a factor in the decision for some people, while others simply enjoy the combination of food flavors in vegetarian meals. Whatever the reason for making the choice, it is important to know that a vegetarian diet can be very healthy, but does require careful planning to ensure an adequate intake of all nutrients.*

### Types of Vegetarians

Plant sources of food--grains, legumes, nuts, seeds, vegetables and fruits--form the basis of a vegetarian diet. Many vegetarians also eat dairy products and eggs, while some eat fish and poultry. Vegetarians describe themselves in one of these ways:



- ◆ **Pesco vegetarians** eat fish, milk, milk products, and eggs
- ◆ **Lacto-ovo vegetarians:** eat milk, milk products, and eggs
- ◆ **Lactovegetarians:** eat milk and milk products
- ◆ **Ovovegetarians:** eat eggs
- ◆ **Vegans:** eat no animal-derived products in their diets, also called "strict vegetarians"

### Nutrients of Special Interest

Teenagers following a vegetarian diet must take special care in planning meals to ensure they are nutritionally adequate. Some nutrients of special interest include:

- ◆ **Calcium:** Vegetarians who do not drink milk or eat dairy products should try to include calcium-rich foods in the diet such as:

*calcium-fortified orange juice and cereal, spinach, turnip greens and tofu.*



Consider a supplement if there is not enough calcium obtained from the diet. See the brochure on **CALCIUM** to learn more about the role of calcium in the body.

- ◆ **Iron:** Since red meat is a good source of iron, vegetarians must plan meals to include other sources of this mineral. Other sources include:

*fortified cereals, whole wheat or enriched bread, instant oatmeal, Cream of Wheat, potatoes with skins, and dried fruits.*

Eating foods rich in vitamin C, such as citrus fruits, with iron-rich foods increases the body's absorption of iron.

- ◆ **Vitamin B12:** Vitamin B12 deficiency can cause anemia and severe, irreversible nerve damage. Vegetarians who consume dairy products or eggs need not worry about vitamin B12. Vegans, however, must include vitamin B12 fortified foods in their diet such as:

*fortified cereals and fortified soy milk.*

- ◆ **Protein:** Plant foods provide an incomplete source of protein because they do not contain all the essential amino acids, the "building blocks" for protein. To obtain all essential amino acids, try to eat a variety of plant sources of protein such as:

*legumes (beans and peas), rice and other grains, seeds, and nuts.*

- ◆ **Zinc:** Zinc is important for growth and sexual maturation. Vegetarian diets tend to be lower in zinc and the mineral is not absorbed as well from foods of plant origin. Good plant sources of zinc include:

*whole grains, legumes, and nuts.*

### Eating in the school cafeteria

Your school cafeteria offers many menu items for vegetarians. Ask the manager for a menu to help you plan your selections.

- ✓ Pasta bar with marinara sauce
- ✓ Baked potato bar
- ✓ Salad bar
- ✓ Cheese pizza
- ✓ Nachos with refried beans
- ✓ Bean burrito
- ✓ Macaroni and cheese
- ✓ Yogurt
- ✓ A variety of fruits and vegetables



### Web Sites related to VEGETARIANISM

Vegetarianism Resource Center - [www.vrg.org/nutrition/](http://www.vrg.org/nutrition/)  
Gwinnett County School Nutrition Program - [www.gcsnp.org](http://www.gcsnp.org)

### GWINNETT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAM

In the operation of the Child Feeding Programs, no child will be discriminated against because of race, sex, color, national origin, age, or handicap. If you believe you have been discriminated against, write to Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250